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Senate

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NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an indispensable group of people in our military. Mid- and senior level enlisted air crew men and women are critical to America's military and need to be properly compensated for their valuable service. Last year's Defense Authorization bill included a provision to adjust hazardous duty incentive pay upward by \$50 for E-1 to E-3 enlisted air crew personnel and upward by \$25 for E-4 air crew personnel. All other enlisted personnel and officers eligible for hazardous duty incentive pay also received an upward adjustment. Unfortunately, E-5 to E-9 air crew personnel were not included in this adjustment.

My amendment provides that \$40 increase in hazardous duty incentive pay for the E-5 to E-9 air crew personnel and adds \$15 to the increase given to E-4 air crew personnel as of this year.

I thank the managers of this bill, Senator Thurmond and Senator Levin, for their support of this important amendment and for their unflagging efforts every year

to help the dedicated men and women in our armed services.

It is crucial that we show our appreciation for America's dedicated mid- and senior level enlisted personnel. They provide vital experience in all of the military's flying missions. They are also in demand in the private sector. Commercial airlines are willing to pay for well-trained and experienced flight crews. One look at the missions being flown by U.S. armed forces, from Bosnia to the Persian Gulf to the Korean Peninsula, shows how indispensable experienced air crews are to the defense of U.S. national interests. We cannot afford to keep losing these seasoned professionals.

My amendment is one step toward addressing the problem now--letting these experienced aircrew personnel know that as our armed forces continue to work at a high operations tempo we value their unique and indispensable contribution to America's national interests.